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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001368

SIPDIS

EUR/SE, NEA/IR

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: POTENTIAL VISIT BY AHMADINEJAD TO TURKEY

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) We spoke with Turkish MFA U/S Apakan and separately with the MFA Iran Desk July 30 about extensive media reporting indicating GOT preparations for a possible visit by Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Istanbul on August 14. We made the following points:

-- With the deadline for an Iranian response to the P5 1 offer expected on or before August 2, we have received no indication that Iran will provide a positive response;

-- Our sense is that there will be a desire to move fast to push for new measures if Iran continues to stall in providing a clear response to the P5 1 offer;

-- There will be an unfortunate contrast between international condemnation/criticism of Iran's nuclear policy and efforts to introduce new sanctions on the one hand, and Turkey welcoming Ahmadinejad despite continuing Iranian defiance of the international community's will on the other;

-- We understand Turkey's need to maintain neighborly relations with Iran. At the same time, we know that international pressure is effective when dealing with Iran. It would not be in Turkey's interest to be seen as not being in sync with the international community's effort to urge Iran to change its course;

-- Ahmadinejad's visit would mark the first bilateral visit to a NATO country. The Government of Iran appears to want this badly. Has the GOT considered conditioning an invitation to Ahmadinejad on a positive response to the P5 1 offer?

-- Such an approach would reinforce the international community's effort to encourage Iran to do the right thing on the nuclear issue while showing a good faith effort on the part of Turkey to maintain neighborly relations.

12. (C) Apakan confirmed that a visit is being considered, but could not provide details on what FM Babacan may have discussed regarding it in his meetings with his Iranian counterpart and with Ahmadinejad in Tehran. Apakan stressed that, if the visit happens, it will be limited in scope, and Turkey will in no way identify with Iran's position. Turkey is a solid NATO ally and a strategic partner of the U.S. He said he would discuss this with FM Babacan and advise later.

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WILSON